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ABSTRACT

An experiment in programed language instruction based on the "Basic French" method of T. Mueller and H. Niedzielski is reviewed in this paper. Seventy-two civil servants participated in the program which provided for 60 hours of taped instruction. Experiment description, objectives, modifications, and a review of the structuring of lessons 1-20 are detailed. Results of the MLA-MA pretest and the MLA-MB posttest, administered respectively in April and September 1969, are furnished. (RL)

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PROGRAMMED FRENCH: AN EXPERIMENT

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The Public Service Commission Language Bureau has conducted a study on the advantages of programmed instruction in second language learning. For purposes of the experiment the "Basic French" method, by T. Mueller and H. Niedzielski was chosen.

BASIC FRENCH:

"Basic French" is a programmed instruction method for learners who are beginning their acquaintance with French. The method consists of 60 hours of taped material divided into 3 phases.

a) Phase I
   i) Phonetic exercises, ear-training in the French sound system.
   ii) Presentation of certain basic structures.
   iii) Introduction of passive vocabulary.

b) Phase II
   i) Presentation, mechanization and reutilization of structures.
   ii) Transposition exercises.
   iii) Points of grammar and syntax.

c) Phase III
   i) Conversation. (dialogues?)
   ii) Reading.

Self correction is carried out by means of a special (access) pen. The correct answer, which is written in invisible ink, becomes visible at the touch of the pen.

This method of programmed learning is used as a means of self-instruction. However, weekly meetings with a teacher to clear up grammatical or structural difficulties are recommended.

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EXPERIMENTATION:

Ninety public servants were invited to undertake the Basic French course. Only seventy-two were able to find the time to do the necessary work. A tape recorder and the student workbooks were distributed together with the tapes for the first five lessons. Students were expected to cover the contents of the first five lessons either at home or at the office and to return the following week for a half-day session with a teacher. This procedure was repeated every week until the whole of the first phase had been completed. At the second phase students received the tapes for three rather than five lessons to which was added one lesson from part three consisting of a reading and conversation. The whole course lasted twenty weeks. This included sixty hours of instruction by a teacher. (The weekly assignment required from ten to fifteen hours of homework.)

MODIFICATIONS:

The methodology had to be adapted to suit the weekly meetings. Since the students were learning vocabulary and structures on their own, the teachers prepared their classes with a view to developing the students' oral expression . The student can develop both aural and written comprehension for himself. It is rather difficult, however, for the student to develop oral expression in the same way. The following methodology was used at these weekly meetings.

Part One: (Part I--Lessons 1-20)

1. Study of the difficulties encountered by the students.
2. Phonetic exercises.
3. Exploitation:
   - i) a) with pictures (Lessons 1-9)
     b) without pictures
   - ii) reutilization of the structures
   - iii) integration of the structures
   - iv) contextualization
   - v) indirect speech

vi) conversation (Lessons 15-20)

4. Quiz

i) oral discrimination

ii) written discrimination

N.B. The methodology for the second part was similar, except that study of the reading and conversation was added.

STUDENTS:

In April, 1969 seventy-two public servants began the course. Nine of them had to withdraw at the end of June. Eight more gave up during the summer on the grounds that they could not make the time to devote 10 to 15 hours a week to homework. Of the remainder, four were unable to be present for the final test.

	April	July 1	Sept. 1	Final Test
Number of Students	72	63	55	51
		87.5%	76.5%	70.8%

TESTS:

The MLA-MA was administered to the students at the beginning of the course and the MLA-MB at the end.

RESULTS:

Group "A"

Tests	Listening (40)	Speaking (82)	Reading (50)	Writing (100)
MLA-MA (April)	16.82	32.47	20.05	----
MLA-MB (September)	29.29	51.47	29.23	48.76

Group "B"

Tests	Listening (40)	Speaking (82)	Reading (50)	Writing (100)
MLA-MA (April)	10.60	20.00	14.73	----
MLA-MB (September)	21.73	41.73	24.46	41.00

Group "C"

Tests	Listening (40)	Speaking (82)	Reading (50)	Writing (100)
MLA-MA	4.53	11.53	8.76	----
MLA-MB	14.23	30.30	17.15	22.76

In order to determine whether the students' progress was significant, the differences between the results (MA-MB) were calculated for each case and the "t" ratio computed. This calculation was undertaken at the 0.0001 probability level.

Group A:

To be significant at the 0.001 probability level "t" must exceed 3.965.

1. Listening: t: 15.587
2. Speaking: t: 11.875
3. Reading: t: 5.954

Group B:

To be significant at the 0.001 probability level "t" must exceed 4.073.

1. Listening: t: 11.718
2. Speaking: t: 7.575
3. Reading: t: 7.315

Group C:

To be significant at the 0.001 probability level "t" must exceed 4.221.

1. Listening: t: 6.251
2. Speaking: t: 5.936
3. Reading: t: 3.223